

Houghton-Colter General Store  
South Pass Avenue  
South Pass City  
Fremont County  
Wyoming

HABS No. WYO-38

HABS  
WYO,  
7-SOPAC,  
11-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D. C. 20005

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. WYO-38

## HOUGHTON-COLTER GENERAL STORE

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WYO,  
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11-

Location: South Pass Avenue, South Pass City, Fremont County,  
Wyoming.  
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: (USGS South  
Pass City Quadrangle Map) 12.680940.4704080.

Present Owner: State of Wyoming.

Present Use: Preserved as historic structure by Wyoming Recreation  
Commission.

Statement of  
Significance: This building is one of the first stores in the gold  
mining boom town of South Pass City and served temporarily  
as the Carter County jail.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1867.
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Legal description of property:  
Lots 95 and 97 on South Pass Avenue, South Pass City, Fremont  
County, Wyoming.

(Note: For further information on land ownership in South  
Pass City see the HABS Report on South Pass City, WYO-27.)  
Although the store was under the ownership of A. L. Houghton  
and S. Colter, ownership of the land was in other hands. The  
original owner of lot 97 was F. W. Waller who sold the lot to  
M. Welsh for \$300. Welsh's lot was sold for back taxes to  
Patrick Skegham who in turn sold the lot to Houghton for \$100.  
Lot 95, on which part of the store is located, was first owned  
by W. D. Mahoney and he sold the lot to John McGlinchey for  
\$25. On August 29, 1869, the Board of Commissioners of Carter  
County, Dakota Territory, agreed to rent the rear room of the  
Houghton and Colter store for seventy-five dollars a month to  
be used as a jail. The room soon proved inadequate for this  
purpose and the Sweetwater County jail was built. In the early  
1870's James Smith bought the building and continued to operate  
it as a store.

Smith married Mrs. Janet Sherlock, and when he died she ran the

store until the last decade of the nineteenth century. In that decade the building to the west of the Houghton-Colter Store, the Smith-Sherlock Store, was built and the Houghton-Colter Store was put to use as a warehouse.

In 1893, the land on which the store stood was claimed by W. T. Meadows, Jno Anderson, Ed Carns and J. B. Irvin. This group sold the Wolverine Lode Claim, on which the Houghton-Colter Store stood, to Barney Tibbals in 1896. He sold the property to Charles Van Sickle in 1898. Van Sickle in 1899 sold the property to John Spry. In 1900, Spry turned the property over to the Federal Gold Mining Company of which he was president. In 1901, the Federal Gold Mining Company sold the property to Mrs. Janet Smith, John Sherlock, William Sherlock and Peter Sherlock. Mrs. Janet Smith died in 1923 leaving her part of South Pass City to be divided between Peter Sherlock, Jennie Sherlock, John Sherlock, William Sherlock and Anna Tibbals. John Sherlock died in 1936 leaving as his heirs Lulu Sherlock, Richard Sherlock, James Sherlock and Donald Sherlock. Janet Sherlock died in 1938 leaving as her heirs Anna Tibbals, Janet Tibbals, and James Tibbals. Peter Sherlock died in 1947 leaving as his heirs William Sherlock, Anna Tibbals, Janet Payne, Norman Smith, Richard Sherlock, James Sherlock, Donald Sherlock and Lulu Topham. In 1948 and 1949, James Sherlock, for \$10 and other considerations, bought the various shares of South Pass City from Richard Sherlock, Anna Tibbals, Janet Payne, Norman Smith, Anna Tibbals, James Tibbals, Donald Sherlock, Lulu Topham, William Sherlock and Janet Smith. He then sold the town to Fred Stratton. In 1955, Stratton sold the town to Mr. and Mrs. John Woodring. In 1966, the Woodrings sold the property to the Wyoming 75th Anniversary Commission, Inc. The Commission turned over the property to the Old South Pass Historical Preserve in 1967. This group was phased out by the Wyoming Legislature in 1969, when the legislature turned over the maintenance and operation of South Pass City to the Wyoming Recreation Commission.

4. Alterations and additions: There is the possibility that what remains of the Houghton-Colter Store was originally the back room that was used as a jail. The room on the east may have been added after the original structure was built. Also the connection between the Houghton-Colter Store and the Smith-Sherlock Store was built some time after the construction of the original structure. Reconstructed in 1974.

- B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure: This was one of the first stores in South Pass City and sold equipment to the miners. It also was temporarily the Carter County jail. The store was bought by James Smith, who married Janet Sherlock,

a pioneer of Fremont County.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views: Photographic file; Wyoming Recreation Commission, Cheyenne, Wyoming.

2. Bibliography:

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

Shaffer, Thomas, planner for the Wyoming Recreation Commission; interview in Cheyenne, Wyoming on June 19, 1973.

Trevor, Marjorie C., "History of Carter-Sweetwater County, Wyoming to 1875." Master's thesis, University of Wyoming; 1954.

b. Secondary and published sources:

Homsher, Lola M. Old South Pass City Historical Preserve, Preliminary Development Plan. Cheyenne, Wyoming: Wyoming Recreation Commission, 1968.

Larson, T. A. History of Wyoming. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965.

Prepared by John Paige  
Project Historian  
National Park Service  
Summer, 1973

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This store, probably the first in South Pass City, is an example of frontier construction from the gold rush days in Wyoming of the 1860's and 1870's.

2. Condition of fabric: Restored

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: This building is approximately 54'-10" x 20'

with a small connecting room at the west end to the Smith-Sherlock store.

2. Foundations: None in evidence.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: Unfinished lodgepole pine log wall with rough-sawn boards nailed over the logs from roof line to approximately three feet above grade. Random rubble red slate shist wall from grade to approximately three feet above grade covers log wall on front and side walls. Random rubble red slate shist wall over log walls full height on rear wall, which was originally laid into the hill behind the building. Upper side (west) wall is surfaced with flattened metal lard cans.
4. Structural system, framing: Log bearing walls supporting six pseudo-trusses of logs. The trusses support five purlins running the long dimension of the building and upon which small round logs (originally with mud chinking) were placed from ridge to eave.
5. Porches, stoops: Small covered entrance in middle of south (front) facade.
6. Chimneys: None.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: There is an entrance door from the covered front entrance porch.
  - b. Windows, shutters: There are two windows in south (front) wall and one window in west (side) wall. All are six-light fixed sash.
8. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: Gable roof with loose sheets of galvanized metal and boards over purlins and logs. Roof over east (smaller) room has green asphalt roll roofing over part of surface.
  - b. Cornice, eaves: None.
  - c. Dormers and cupolas: None.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: In addition to the small room which connects to

the Smith-Sherlock Store on the west, the store has two rooms. The larger of these rooms is the room on the west into which the entry opens. The room on the east appears to have possibly been a later addition.

2. Stairways: None.
3. Flooring: Rough-sawn planks over hand-hewn logs (eight inches to ten inches in diameter) at 48 inches on center. Much of this flooring was removed and piled in the smaller room in the summer of 1972 by an historical archeology team from the University of Wyoming. Their work was in preparation for the restoration of the store which began during the late summer of 1973.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Originally wall paper over muslin over logs. It is mostly exposed logs at this time.
5. Doorways and doors: There is one doorway from the larger into the smaller room and one doorway into connecting link from larger room. There is one doorway from the connecting link into the Smith-Sherlock Store. The door into Smith-Sherlock Store is wooden with four recessed panels. No other doorways have doors.
6. Trim and cabinet work: Storage shelves on west wall of west room.
7. Natable hardware: None.
8. Mechanical equipment: Electric lights have been added.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Located on the north side of South Pass Avenue between the Smith-Sherlock Store on the west and the Cave on the east, the store faces 35 degrees east of south in the heart of the original town.
2. Outbuildings: None.

Prepared by J. William Rudd  
Architect  
Project Supervisor  
National Park Service  
Summer, 1973

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were made during the 1973 Wyoming Project undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with the Wyoming Recreation Commission. During the project, records were made on twenty-eight (28) individual subjects and six (6) historic areas.

This project was under the general supervision of John Poppeliers, chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey. Project Supervisor was Professor J. William Rudd, Architect, of the University of Cincinnati. Project Historian was John Paige, Oklahoma State University. The measured drawings were prepared by John Uhler, University of California at Berkeley, Architect; and Student Assistant Architects Richard Duflocq, University of Cincinnati, Clayton Fraser, University of Tennessee, and Richard Wyatt, California Polytechnic University at San Luis Obispo. This report was edited for HABS in 1977 by Candace Reed.